**WORLD WAR II and Beyond: THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE UNIT PROJECT**

**Project Description**

Students will use their knowledge of the social divisions that became more apparent in the United States after World War II. Students will demonstrate this by writing a brief essay in the format of a letter to an editor of a local newspaper. Students will view social inequality from the perspective of an African American soldier returning to the Deep South after fighting abroad in World War II.

**Procedures**

Step 1: Show students the prompt for their essay: Imagine that you are an African American soldier returning to your hometown in Alabama after fighting in the Allied victory in Germany. Write a 500-word letter to the editor of your local newspaper that reflects upon your experiences in the war and your feelings about your place in society upon your return. What are your suggestions for making society more equitable?

Step 2: Provide students with templates and tip sheets demonstrating proper format for a letter to the editor.

Step 3: Provide students with hard copies of sample letters to the editor.

Step 4: Give students remainder of period (10-15 minutes) to brainstorm ideas for the essay and to ask any final questions they might have

**Evaluation Criteria For Letter to the Editor**

* Demonstrates a clear link between the experience of their military service and their expectations for greater social mobility
* Compares segregation in American institutions to fascism in Nazi Germany
* Expresses a desire to change the status quo
* Follows the template provided for a letter to the editor
* Communicates thinking in a consistent style and tone
* Ideas are organized thoughtfully, consistently, and essay flows naturally
* The letter does not contain excessive errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation

Differentiation: Students with writing/reading and ADHD accommodations will have a more flexible due date and the possibility of a smaller word count requirement depending on their IEPs. The TAG student will write his/her letter to the editor from the perspective of a Jewish European that was freed from a concentration camp by a regiment of African American troops to an American audience.

**Resources to Help You Write Your Letter to the Editor**

<http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/special_initiatives/toolkit_resources/tipsheets/writing_letter_editor.cfm>

This site offers up tips and suggestions about how to write an effective letter to the editor.

[http://www.extensionpartners.org/upload\_files/Template for LTTE.doc](http://www.extensionpartners.org/upload_files/Template%20for%20LTTE.doc)

The above link provides a sample letter to the editor template. It provides a valuable model for how to structure your letter.

<http://blog.oregonlive.com/myoregon/letters_to_the_editor/index.html>

This is a link to the Oregonian’s page for letters to the editor. Take a look and see how voice and tone come through in the letters. The approval process to have a letter published is pretty strict, so you can look at these letters to serve as good examples.